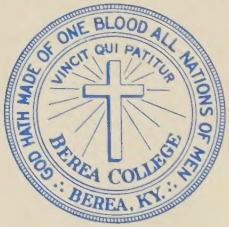
[redacted]

Library
of
Berea College



Berea, Kentucky
WITHDRAWN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/thundersofsilenc0000unse

BY IRVIN S. COBB

FICTION

THOSE TIMES AND THESE
LOCAL COLOR
OLD JUDGE PRIEST
FIBBLE, D.D.
BACK HOME
THE ESCAPE OF MR. TRIMM

WIT AND HUMOR

"SPEAKING OF OPERATIONS——"
EUROPE REVISED
ROUGHING IT DE LUXE
COBB'S BILL OF FARE
COBB'S ANATOMY

MISCELLANY

THE THUNDERS OF SILENCE
"SPEAKING OF PRUSSIANS——"
PATHS OF GLORY

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
NEW YORK

BINDER.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE A MIGHTY PATIENT LOT.

The Thunders of Silence

By

Irvin S. Cobb

Author of "Paths of Glory," "Speaking of Prussians——," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

New York

George H. Doran Company

COPYRIGHT, 1918,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1918, BY THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

C653t

ILLUSTRATIONS

The American people are a mighty patient lot. . . . . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

The lone wolf wasn't a lone wolf any longer. He had a pack to rally about him . . 16

That's the thing he feeds on—Vanity . 32

He may or may not keep faith but you can bet he always keeps a scrap-book . 48

The Thunders of Silence

SOME people said Congressman Mallard had gone mad. These were his friends, striving out of the goodness of their hearts to put the best face on what at best was a lamentable situation. Some said he was a traitor to his country. These were his enemies, personal, political and journalistic. Some called him a patriot who put humanity above nationality, a new John the Baptist come out of the wilderness to preach a sobering doctrine of world-peace to a world made drunk on war. And these were his followers. Of the first—his friends—there were not many left. Of the second group there were millions that multiplied themselves. Of the third there had been at the outset but a timorous and furtive few, and they mostly men and women who spoke English, if they spoke it at all, with the halting speech and the twisted idiom that

betrayed their foreign birth; being persons who found it entirely consistent to applaud the preachment of planetic disarmament out of one side of their mouths, and out of the other side of their mouths to pray for the success at arms of the War Lord whose hand had shoved the universe over the rim of the chasm. But each passing day now saw them increasing in number and in audacity. Taking courage to themselves from the courage of their apostle, these, his disciples, were beginning to shout from the housetops what once they had only dared whisper beneath the eaves. Disloyalty no longer smouldered; it was blazing up. It crackled, and threw off firebrands.

Of all those who sat in judgment upon the acts and the utterances of the man—and this classification would include every articulate creature in the United States who was old enough to be reasonable—or unreasonable—only a handful had the right diagnosis for the case. Here and there were to be found men who knew he was neither crazed nor inspired; and quite rightly they put no credence in the charge that he had

sold himself for pieces of silver to the enemy of his own nation. They knew what ailed the Honourable Jason Mallard—that he was a victim of a strangulated ambition, of an egotistic hernia. He was hopelessly ruptured in his vanity. All his life he had lived on love of notoriety, and by that same perverted passion he was being eaten up. Once he had diligently besought the confidence and the affections of a majority of his fellow citizens; now he seemed bent upon consolidating their hate for him into a common flood and laving himself in it. Well, if such was his wish he was having it; there was no denying that.

In the prime of his life, before he was fifty, it had seemed that almost for the asking the presidency might have been his. He had been born right, as the saying goes, and bred right, to make suitable presidential timber. He came of fine clean blends of blood. His father had been a descendant of Norman-English folk who settled in Maryland before the Revolution; the family name had originally been Maillard, afterward corrupted into Mallard. His moth-

er's people were Scotch-Irish immigrants of the types that carved out their homesteads with axes on the spiny haunches of the Cumberlands. In the Civil War his father had fought for the Union, in a regiment of borderers; two of his uncles had been partisan rangers on the side of the Confederacy. If he was a trifle young to be of that generation of public men who were born in unchinked log cabins of the wilderness or prairie-sod shanties, at least he was to enjoy the subsequent political advantage of having come into the world in a two-room house of unpainted pine slabs on the sloped withers of a mountain in East Tennessee. As a child he had been taken by his parents to one of the states which are called pivotal states. There he had grown up—farm boy first, teacher of a district school, self-taught lawyer, county attorney, state legislator, governor, congressman for five terms, a floor leader of his party—so that by ancestry and environment, by the ethics of political expediency and political geography, by his own record and by the traditions of the time,

he was formed to make an acceptable presidential aspirant.

In person he was most admirably adapted for the rôle of statesman. He had a figure fit to set off a toga, a brow that might have worn a crown with dignity. As an orator he had no equal in Congress or, for that matter, out of it. He was a burning mountain of eloquence, a veritable human Vesuvius from whom, at will, flowed rhetoric or invective, satire or sentiment, as lava might flow from a living volcano. His mind spawned sonorous phrases as a roe shad spawns eggs. He was in all outward regards a shape of a man to catch the eye, with a voice to cajole the senses as with music of bugles, and an oratory to inspire. Moreover, the destiny which shaped his ends had mercifully denied him that which is a boon to common men but a curse to public men. Jason Mallard was without a sense of humour. He never laughed at others; he never laughed at himself. Certain of our public leaders have before now fallen into the woful error of doing one or both of these things. Wherefore they were forever after

called humourists—and ruined. When they said anything serious their friends took it humorously, and when they said anything humorously their enemies took it seriously. But Congressman Mallard was safe enough there.

Being what he was—a handsome bundle of selfishness, coated over with a fine gloss of seeming humility, a creature whose every instinct was richly mulched in self-conceit and yet one who simulated a deep devotion for mankind at large—he couldn't make either of these mistakes.

Upon a time the presidential nomination of his party—the dominant party, too—had been almost within his grasp. That made his losing it all the more bitter. Thereafter he became an obstructionist, a fighter outside of the lines of his own party and not within the lines of the opposing party, a leader of the elements of national discontent and national discord, a mouthpiece for all those who would tear down the pillars of the temple because they dislike its present tenants. Once he had courted popularity; presently—this coming after his re-election

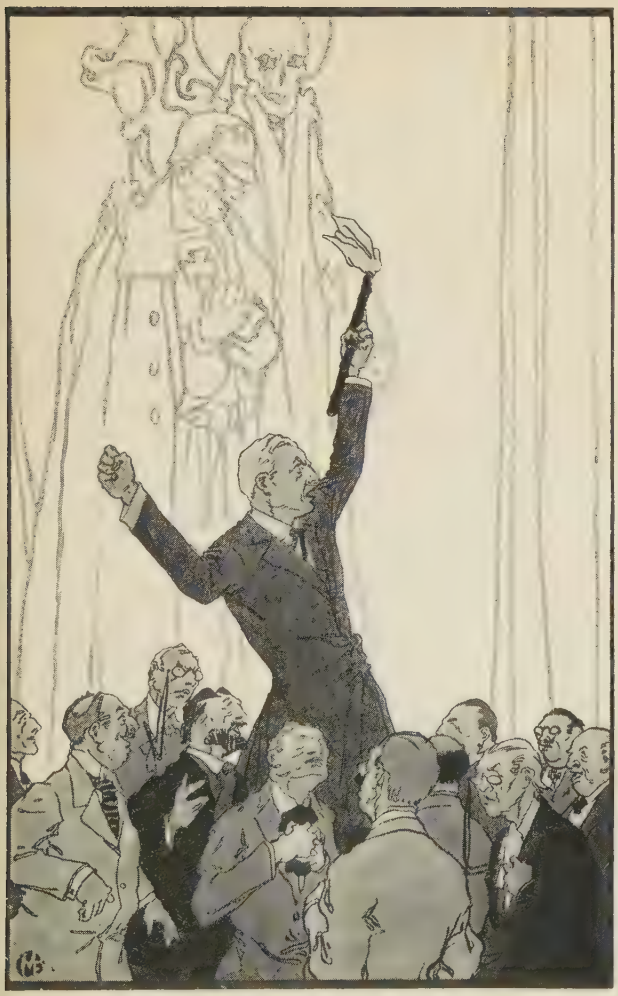
to a sixth term—he went out of his way to win unpopularity. His invectives ate in like corrosives, his metaphors bit like adders. Always he had been like a sponge to sop up adulation; now he was to prove that when it came to withstanding denunciation his hide was the hide of a rhino.

This war came along, and after more than two years of it came our entry into it. For the most part, in the national capital and out of it, artificial lines of partisan division were wiped out under a tidal wave of patriotism. So far as the generality of Americans were concerned, they for the time being were neither Democrats nor Republicans; neither were they Socialists nor Independents nor Prohibitionists. For the duration of the war they were Americans, actuated by a common purpose and stirred by a common danger. Afterward they might be, politically speaking, whatever they chose to be, but for the time being they were just Americans. Into this unique condition Jason Mallard projected himself, an upstanding reef of opposition to break the

fine continuity of a mighty ground swell of national unity and national harmony.

Brilliant, formidable, resourceful, seemingly invulnerable, armoured in apparent disdain for the contempt and the indignation of the masses of the citizenship, he fought against and voted against the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Germany; fought against the draft, fought against the war appropriations, fought against the plans for a bigger navy, the plans for a great army; fought the first Liberty Loan and the second; he fought, in December last, against a declaration of war with Austro-Hungary. And, so far as the members of Congress were concerned, he fought practically single-handed.

His vote cast in opposition to the will of the majority meant nothing; his voice raised in opposition meant much. For very soon the avowed pacifists and the secret protagonists of Kultur, the blood-eyed anarchists and the lily-livered dissenters, the conscientious objectors and the conscienceless I. W. W. group, saw in him a buttress upon which to stay their cause. The lone wolf wasn't



THE LONE WOLF WASN'T A LONE WOLF ANY LONGER.
HE HAD A PACK TO RALLY ABOUT HIM.

a lone wolf any longer—he had a pack to rally about him, yelping approval of his every word. Day by day he grew stronger and day by day the sinister elements behind him grew bolder, echoing his challenges against the Government and against the war. With practically every newspaper in America, big and little, fighting him; with every influential magazine fighting him; with the leaders of the Administration fighting him—he nevertheless loomed on the national sky line as a great sinister figure of defiance and rebellion.

Deft word chandlers of the magazines and the daily press coined terms of opprobrium for him. He was the King of the Copperheads, the Junior Benedict Arnold, the Modern Judas, the Second Aaron Burr; these things and a hundred others they called him; and he laughed at hard names and in reply coined singularly apt and cruel synonyms for the more conspicuous of his critics. The oldest active editor in the country—and the most famous—called upon the body of which he was a member to impeach him for acts of disloyalty, tending to give aid

and comfort to the common enemy. The great president of a great university suggested as a proper remedy for what seemed to ail this man Mallard that he be shot against a brick wall some fine morning at sunrise. At a monstrous mass meeting held in the chief city of Mallard's home state, a mass meeting presided over by the governor of that state, resolutions were unanimously adopted calling upon him to resign his commission as a representative. His answer to all three was a speech which, as translated, was shortly thereafter printed in pamphlet form by the Berlin Lokal-Anzeiger and circulated among the German soldiers at the Front.

For you see Congressman Mallard felt safe, and Congressman Mallard was safe. His buckler was the right of free speech; his sword, the argument that he stood for peace through all the world, for arbitration and disarmament among all the peoples of the world.

It was on the evening of a day in January of this present year that young Drayton,

Washington correspondent for the New York Epoch, sat in the office of his bureau on the second floor of the Hibbett Building, revising his account of a scene he had witnessed that afternoon from the press gallery of the House. He had instructions from his managing editor to cover the story at length. At ten o'clock he had finished what would make two columns in type and was polishing off his opening paragraphs before putting the manuscript on the wire when the door of his room opened and a man came in—a shabby, tremulous figure. The comer was Quinlan.

Quinlan was forty years old and looked fifty. Before whisky got him Quinlan had been a great newspaper man. Now that his habits made it impossible for him to hold a steady job he was become a sort of news tipster. Occasionally also he did small lobbying of a sort; his acquaintance with public men and his intimate knowledge of Washington officialdom served him in both these precarious fields of endeavour. The liquor he drank—whenever and wherever he could get it—had bloated his face out of

all wholesome contour and had given to his stomach a chronic distention, but had depleted his frame and shrunken his limbs so that physically he was that common enough type of the hopeless alcoholic—a meagre rack of a man burdened amidships by an unhealthy and dropsical plumpness.

At times when he was not completely sodden—when he had in him just enough whisky to stimulate his soaked brain, and yet not enough of it to make him maudlin—he displayed flashes of a one-time brilliancy which by contrast with his usual state made the ruinous thing he had done to himself seem all the more pitiable.

Drayton of the Epoch was one of the newspaper men upon whom he sponged. Always preserving the fiction that he was borrowing because of temporary necessity, he got small sums of money out of Drayton from time to time, and in exchange gave the younger man bits of helpful information. It was not so much news that he furnished Drayton as it was insight into causes working behind political and diplomatic events. He came in now without knock-

ing and stood looking at Drayton with an ingratiating flicker in his dulled eyes.

"Hello, Quinlan!" said Drayton. "What's on your mind to-night?"

"Nothing, until you get done there," said Quinlan, letting himself lop down into a chair across the desk from Drayton. "Go ahead and get through. I've got nowhere to come but in, and nowhere to go but out."

"I'm just putting the final touches on my story of Congressman Mallard's speech," said Drayton. "Want to read my introduction?"

Privately Drayton was rather pleased with the job and craved approval for his craftsmanship from a man who still knew good writing when he saw it, even though he could no longer write it.

"No, thank you," said Quinlan. "All I ever want to read about that man is his obituary."

"You said it!" agreed Drayton. "It's what most of the decent people in this country are thinking, I guess, even if they haven't begun saying it out loud yet. It strikes me the American people are a mighty patient

lot—putting up with that demagogue. That was a rotten thing that happened up on the hill to-day, Quinlan—a damnable thing. Here was Mallard making the best speech in the worst cause that ever I heard, and getting away with it too. And there was Richland trying to answer him and in comparison making a spectacle of himself—Richland with all the right and all the decency on his side and yet showing up like a perfect dub alongside Mallard, because he hasn't got one-tenth of Mallard's ability as a speaker or one-tenth of Mallard's personal fire or stage presence or magnetism or whatever it is that makes Mallard so plausible—and so dangerous."

"That's all true enough, no doubt," said Quinlan; "and since it is true why don't the newspapers put Mallard out of business?"

"Why don't the newspapers put him out of business!" echoed Drayton. "Why, good Lord, man, isn't that what they've all been trying to do for the last six months? They call him every name in the calendar, and it all rolls off him like water off a duck's back.

He seems to get nourishment out of abuse that would kill any other man. He thrives on it, if I'm any judge. I believe a hiss is music to his ears and a curse is a hushaby, lullaby song. Put him out of business? Why say, doesn't nearly every editorial writer in the country jump on him every day, and don't all the paragraphers gibe at him, and don't all the cartoonists lampoon him, and don't all of us who write news from down here in Washington give him the worst of it in our despatches? . . . And what's the result? Mallard takes on flesh and every red-mouthed agitator in the country and every mushy-brained peace fanatic and every secret German sympathiser trails at his heels, repeating what he says. I'd like to know what the press of America hasn't done to put him out of business!

"There never was a time, I guess, when the reputable press of this country was so united in its campaign to kill off a man as it is now in its campaign to kill off Mallard. No paper gives him countenance, except some of these foreign-language rags and these dirty little disloyal sheets; and until

here just lately even they didn't dare to come out in the open and applaud him. Anyway, who reads them as compared with those who read the real newspapers and the real magazines? Nobody! And yet he gets stronger every day. He's a national menace —that's what he is."

"You said it again, son," said Quinlan. "Six months ago he was a national nuisance and now he's a national menace; and who's responsible—or, rather, what's responsible—for him being a national menace? Well, I'm going to tell you; but first I'm going to tell you something about Mallard. I've known him for twelve years, more or less—ever since he came here to Washington in his long frock coat that didn't fit him and his big black slouch hat and his white string tie and in all the rest of the regalia of the counterfeit who's trying to fool people into believing he's part tribune and part peasant."

"You wouldn't call Mallard a counterfeit, would you?—a man with the gifts he's got," broke in Drayton. "I've heard him called everything else nearly in the Eng-

lish language, but you're the first man that ever called him a counterfeit, to my knowledge!"

"Counterfeit? Why, he's as bogus as a pewter dime," said Quinlan. "I tell you I know the man. Because you don't know him he's got you fooled the same as he's got so many other people fooled. Because he looks like a steel engraving of Henry Clay you think he is a Henry Clay, I suppose—anyhow, a lot of other people do; but I'm telling you his resemblance to Henry Clay is all on the outside—it doesn't strike in any farther than the hair roots. He calls himself a self-made man. Well, he's not; he's self-assembled, that's all. He's made up of standardised and interchangeable parts. He's compounded of something borrowed from every political mountebank who's pulled that old bunk about being a friend of the great common people and gotten away with it during the last fifty years. He's not a real genius. He's a synthetic genius.

"There are just two things about Mallard that are not spurious—two things that make

up the real essence and tissue of him: One is his genius as a speaker and the other is his vanity; and the bigger of these, you take it from me, is his vanity. That's the thing he feeds on—vanity. It's the breath in his nostrils, it's the savour and the salt on his daily bread. He lives on publicity, on notoriety. And yet you, a newspaper man, sit here wondering how the newspapers could kill him, and never guessing the real answer."

"Well, what is the answer then?" demanded Drayton.

"Wait, I'm coming to that. The press is always prating about the power of the press, always nagging about pitiless publicity being potent to destroy an evil thing or a bad man, and all that sort of rot. And yet every day the newspapers give the lie to their own boastings. It's true, Drayton, that up to a certain point the newspapers can make a man by printing favourable things about him. By that same token they imagine they can tear him down by printing unfavourable things about him. They think they can, but they can't. Let them

get together in a campaign of vituperation against a man, and at once they set everybody to talking about him. Then let them carry their campaign just over a psychological dividing line, and right away they begin, against their wills, to manufacture sentiment for him. The reactions of printer's ink are stronger somehow than its original actions—its chemical processes acquire added strength in the back kick. What has saved many a rotten criminal in this country from getting his just deserts? It wasn't the fact that the newspapers were all for him. It was the fact that all the newspapers were against him. The under dog may be ever so bad a dog, but only let enough of us start kicking him all together, and what's the result? Sympathy for him—that's what. Calling 'Unclean, unclean!' after a leper never yet made people shun him. It only makes them crowd up closer to see his sores. I'll bet if the facts were known that was true two thousand years ago. Certainly it's true to-day, and human nature doesn't change.

"But the newspapers have one weapon

they've never yet used; at least as a unit they've never used it. It's the strongest weapon they've got, and the cheapest, and the most terrible, and yet they let it lie in its scabbard and rust. With that weapon they could destroy any human being of the type of Jason Mallard in one-twentieth of the time it takes them to build up public opinion for or against him. And yet they can't see it—or won't see that it's there, all forged and ready to their hands."

"And that weapon is what?" asked Drayton.

"Silence. Absolute, utter silence. Silence is the loudest thing in the world. It thunders louder than the thunder. And it's the deadliest. What drives men mad who are put in solitary confinement? The darkness? The solitude? Well, they help. But it's silence that does the trick—silence that roars in their ears until it cracks their eardrums and addles their brains.

"Mallard is a national peril, we'll concede. Very well then, he should be destroyed. And the surest, quickest, best way for the newspapers to destroy him is to wall

him up in silence, to put a vacuum bell of silence down over him, to lock him up in silence, to bury him alive in silence. And that's a simpler thing than it sounds. They have, all of them, only to do one little thing—just quit printing his name."

"But they can't quit printing his name, Quinlan!" exclaimed Drayton. "Mallard's news; he's the biggest figure in the news that there is to-day in this country."

"That's the same foolish argument that the average newspaper man would make," said Quinlan scornfully. "Mallard is news because the newspapers make news of him—and for no other reason. Let them quit, and he isn't news any more—he's a nonentity, he's nothing at all, he's null and he's void. So far as public opinion goes he will cease to exist, and a thing that has ceased to exist is no longer news—once you've printed the funeral notice. Every popular thing, every conspicuous thing in the world is born of notoriety and fed on notoriety—newspaper notoriety. Notoriety is as essential to the object of notoriety itself as it is in fashioning the sentiments of those who read about

it. And there's just one place where you can get wholesale, nation-wide notoriety today—out of the jaws of a printing press.

"We call baseball our national pastime—granted! But let the newspapers, all of them, during one month of this coming spring, quit printing a word about baseball, and you'd see the parks closed up and the weeds growing on the base lines and the turnstiles rusting solid. You remember those deluded ladies who almost did the cause of suffrage some damage last year by picketing the White House and bothering the President when he was busy with the biggest job that any man had tackled in this country since Abe Lincoln? Remember how they raised such a hullabaloo when they were sent to the workhouse? Well, suppose the newspapers, instead of giving them front-page headlines and columns of space every day, had refused to print a line about them or even so much as to mention their names. Do you believe they would have stuck to the job week after week as they did stick to it? I tell you they'd have quit cold inside of forty-eight hours.

"Son, your average latter-day martyr endures his captivity with fortitude because he knows the world, through the papers, is going to hear the pleasant clanking of his chains. Otherwise he'd burst from his cell with a disappointed yell and go out of the martyr business instanter. He may not fear the gallows or the stake or the pillory, but he certainly does love his press notices. He may or may not keep the faith, but you can bet he always keeps a scrapbook. Silence—that's the thing he fears more than hangman's nooses or firing squads.

"And that's the cure for your friend, Jason Mallard, Esquire. Let the press of this country put the curse of silence on him and he's done for. Silence will kill off his cause and kill off his following and kill him off. It will kill him politically and figuratively. I'm not sure, knowing the man as I do, but what it will kill him actually. Entomb him in silence and he'll be a body of death and corruption in two weeks. Just let the newspapers and the magazines provide the grave, and the corpse will provide itself."

Drayton felt himself catching the fever of Quinlan's fire. He broke in eagerly.

"But, Quinlan, how could it be done?" he asked. "How could you get concerted action for a thing that's so revolutionary, so unprecedented, so——"

"This happens to be one time in the history of the United States when you could get it," said the inebriate. "You could get it because the press is practically united today in favour of real Americanism. Let some man like your editor-in-chief, Fred Core, or like Carlos Seers of the Era, or Manuel Oxus of the Period, or Malcolm Flint of the A. P. call a private meeting in New York of the biggest individual publishers of daily papers and the leading magazine publishers and the heads of all the press associations and news syndicates, from the big fellows clear down to the shops that sell boiler plate to the country weeklies with patent insides. Through their concerted influence that crowd could put the thing over in twenty-four hours. They could line up the Authors' League, line up the defence societies, line up the national advertisers,

THAT'S THE THING HE FEEDS ON—VANITY.

line up organised labour in the printing trades—line up everybody and everything worth while. Oh, it could be done—make no mistake about that. Call it a boycott; call it coercion, mob law, lynch law, anything you please—it's justifiable. And there'd be no way out for Mallard. He couldn't bring an injunction suit to make a newspaper publisher print his name. He couldn't buy advertising space to tell about himself if nobody would sell it to him. There's only one thing he could do—and if I'm any judge he'd do it, sooner or later."

Young Drayton stood up. His eyes were blazing.

"Do you know what I'm going to do, Quinlan?" he asked. "I'm going to run up to New York on the midnight train. If I can't get a berth on a sleeper I'll sit up in a day coach. I'm going to rout Fred Core out of bed before breakfast time in the morning and put this thing up to him just as you've put it up to me here to-night. If I can make him see it as you've made me see it, he'll get busy. If he doesn't see it, there's no harm done. But in any event

it's your idea, and I'll see to it that you're not cheated out of the credit for it."

The dipsomaniac shook his head. The flame of inspiration had died out in Quinlan; he was a dead crater again—a drunkard quivering for the lack of stimulant.

"Never mind the credit, son. What was it wise old Omar said—'Take the cash and let the credit go'?—something like that anyhow. You run along up to New York and kindle the fires. But before you start I wish you'd loan me about two dollars. Some of these days when my luck changes I'll pay it all back. I'm keeping track of what I owe you. Or say, Drayton—make it five dollars, won't you, if you can spare it?"

Beforehand there was no announcement of the purpose to be accomplished. The men in charge of the plan and the men directly under them, whom they privily commissioned to carry out their intent, were all of them sworn to secrecy. And all of them kept the pledge. On a Monday Congressman Mallard's name appeared in practically every daily paper in America, for

it was on that evening that he was to address a mass meeting at a hall on the Lower West Side of New York—a meeting ostensibly to be held under the auspices of a so-called society for world peace. But sometime during Monday every publisher of every newspaper and periodical, of every trade paper, every religious paper, every farm paper in America, received a telegram from a certain address in New York. This telegram was marked Confidential. It was signed by a formidable list of names. It was signed by three of the most distinguished editors in America; by the heads of all the important news-gathering and news-distributing agencies; by the responsible heads of the leading feature syndicates; by the presidents of the two principal telegraph companies; by the presidents of the biggest advertising agencies; by a former President of the United States; by a great Catholic dignitary; by a great Protestant evangelist, and by the most eloquent rabbi in America; by the head of the largest banking house on this continent; by a retired military officer of the highest rank; by a national leader of

organised labour; by the presidents of four of the leading universities; and finally by a man who, though a private citizen, was popularly esteemed to be the mouthpiece of the National Administration.

While this blanket telegram was travelling over the wires a certain magazine publisher was stopping his presses to throw out a special article for the writing of which he had paid fifteen hundred dollars to the best satirical essayist in the country; and another publisher was countermanding the order he had given to a distinguished caricaturist for a series of cartoons all dealing with the same subject, and was tearing up two of the cartoons which had already been delivered and for which he already had paid. He offered to pay for the cartoons not yet drawn, but the artist declined to accept further payment when he was told in confidence the reason for the cancellation of the commission.

On a Monday morning Congressman Jason Mallard's name was in every paper; his picture was in many of them. On the day following—— But I am getting ahead

of my story. Monday evening comes before Tuesday morning, and first I should tell what befell on Monday evening down on the Lower West Side.

That Monday afternoon Mallard came up from Washington; only his 'secretary came with him. Three men—the owner of a publication lately suppressed by the Post Office Department for seditious utterances, a former clergyman whose attitude in the present crisis had cost him his pulpit, and a former college professor of avowedly anarchistic tendencies—met him at the Pennsylvania Station. Of the three only the clergyman had a name which bespoke Anglo-Saxon ancestry. These three men accompanied him to the home of the editor, where they dined together; and when the dinner was ended an automobile bore the party through a heavy snowstorm to the hall where Mallard was to speak.

That is to say, it bore the party to within a block and a half of the hall. It could get no nearer than that by reason of the fact that the narrow street from house line on one side to house line on the other was

jammed with men and women, thousands of them, who, coming too late to secure admission to the hall—the hall was crowded as early as seven o'clock—had stayed on, outside, content to see their champion and to cheer him since they might not hear him. They were half frozen. The snow in which they stood had soaked their shoes and chilled their feet; there were holes in the shoes which some of them wore. The snow stuck to their hats and clung on their shoulders, making streaks there like fleecy epaulets done in the colour of peace, which also is the colour of cowardice and surrender. There was a cold wind which made them all shiver and set the teeth of many of them to chattering; but they had waited.

A squad of twenty-odd policemen, aligned in a triangular formation about Mallard and his sponsors and, with Captain Bull Hargis of the Traffic Squad as its massive apex, this human ploughshare literally slugged a path through the mob to the side entrance of the hall. By sheer force the living wedge made a furrow in the multitude—a furrow that instantly closed in behind it

as it pressed forward. Undoubtedly the policemen saved Congressman Mallard from being crushed and buffeted down under the caressing hands of those who strove with his bodyguard to touch him, to embrace him, to clasp his hand. Foreign-born women, whose sons were in the draft, sought to kiss the hem of his garments when he passed them by, and as they stooped they were bowled over by the uniformed burlies and some of them were trampled. Disregarding the buffeting blows of the policemen's gloved fists, men, old, young and middle-aged, flung themselves against the escorts, crying out greetings. Above the hysterical yelling rose shrill cries of pain, curses, shrieks. Guttural sounds of cheering in snatchy fragments were mingled with terms of approval and of endearment and of affection uttered in English, in German, in Russian, in Yiddish and in Finnish.

Afterward Captain Bull Hargis said that never in his recollection of New York crowds had there been a crowd so hard to contend against or one so difficult to penetrate; he said this between gasps for breath

while nursing a badly sprained thumb. The men under him agreed with him. The thing overpassed anything in their professional experiences. Several of them were veterans of the force too.

It was a dramatic entrance which Congressman Mallard made before his audience within the hall, packed as the hall was, with its air all hot and sticky with the animal heat of thousands of closely bestowed human bodies. Hardly could it have been a more dramatic entrance. From somewhere in the back he suddenly came out upon the stage. He was bareheaded and bare-throated. Outside in that living whirlpool his soft black hat had been plucked from his head and was gone. His collar, tie and all, had been torn from about his neck, and the same rudely affectionate hand that wrested the collar away had ripped his linen shirt open so that the white flesh of his chest showed through the gap of the tear. His great disorderly mop of bright red hair stood erect on his scalp like an oriflamme. His overcoat was half on and half off his back.

At sight of him the place rose at him, howling out its devotion. He flung off his overcoat, letting it fall upon the floor, and he strode forward almost to the trough of the footlights; and then for a space he stood there on the rounded apron of the platform, staring out into the troubled, tossing pool of contorted faces and tossing arms below him and about him. Demagogue he may have been; demigod he looked in that, his moment of supreme triumph, biding his time to play upon the passions and the prejudices of this multitude as a master organist would play upon the pipes of an organ. Here was clay, plastic to his supple fingers—here in this seething conglomerate of half-baked intellectuals, of emotional rebels against constituted authority, of alien enemies of malcontents and malingerers, of parlour anarchists from the studios of Bohemianism and authentic anarchists from the slums.

Ten blaring, exultant minutes passed before the ex-clergyman, who acted as chairman, could secure a measure of comparative quiet. At length there came a lull in

the panting tumult. Then the chair made an announcement which brought forth in fuller volume than ever a responsive roar of approval. He announced that on the following night and on the night after, Congressman Mallard would speak at Madison Square Garden, under the largest roof on Manhattan Island. The committee in charge had been emboldened by the size of this present outpouring to engage the garden; the money to pay the rent for those two nights had already been subscribed; admission would be free; all would be welcome to come and—quoting the chairman—"to hear the truth about the war into which the Government, at the bidding of the capitalistic classes, had plunged the people of the nation." Then in ten words he introduced the speaker, and as the speaker raised his arms above his head invoking quiet, there fell, magically, a quick, deep, breathless hush upon the palpitant gathering.

"And this"—he began without preamble in that great resonant voice of his, that was like a blast of a trumpet—"and this, my countrymen, is the answer which the plain

people of this great city make to the corrupted and misguided press that would crucify any man who dares defy it."

He spoke for more than an hour, and when he was done his hearers were as madmen and madwomen. And yet so skilfully had he phrased his utterances, so craftily had he injected the hot poison, so deftly had he avoided counselling outright disobedience to the law, that sundry secret-service men who had been detailed to attend the meeting and to arrest the speaker, United States representative though he be, in case he preached a single sentence of what might be interpreted as open treason, were completely circumvented.

It is said that on this night Congressman Mallard made the best speech he ever made in his whole life. But as to that we cannot be sure, and for this reason:

On Monday morning, as has twice been stated in this account, Congressman Mallard's name was in every paper, nearly, in America. On Tuesday morning not a line concerning him or concerning his speech or the remarkable demonstration of the night

before—not a line of news, not a line of editorial comment, not a paragraph—appeared in any newspaper printed in the English language on this continent. The silent war had started.

Tuesday evening at eight-fifteen Congressman Mallard came to Madison Square Garden, accompanied by the honour guard of his sponsors. The police department, taking warning by what had happened on Monday night down on the West Side, had sent the police reserves of four precincts—six hundred uniformed men, under an inspector and three captains—to handle the expected congestion inside and outside the building. These six hundred men had little to do after they formed their lines and lanes except to twiddle their night sticks and to stamp their chilled feet.

For a strange thing befell. Thousands had participated in the affair of the night before. By word of mouth these thousands most surely must have spread the word among many times their own number of sympathetic individuals. And yet—this was the strange part—by actual count less

than fifteen hundred persons, exclusive of the policemen, who were there because their duty sent them there, attended Tuesday night's meeting. To be exact there were fourteen hundred and seventy-five of them. In the vast oval of the interior they made a ridiculously small clump set midway of the area, directly in front of the platform that had been put up. All about them were wide reaches of seating space—empty. The place was a huge vaulted cavern, cheerless as a cave, full of cold drafts and strange echoes. Congressman Mallard spoke less than an hour, and this time he did not make the speech of his life.

Wednesday night thirty policemen were on duty at Madison Square Garden, Acting Captain O'Hara of the West Thirtieth Street Station being in command. Over the telephone to headquarters O'Hara, at eight-thirty, reported that his tally accounted for two hundred and eighty-one persons present. Congressman Mallard, he stated, had not arrived yet, but was momentarily expected.

At eight-forty-five O'Hara telephoned

again. Congressman Mallard had just sent word that he was ill and would not be able to speak. This message had been brought by Professor Rascovertus, the former college professor, who had come in a cab and had made the bare announcement to those on hand and then had driven away. The assembled two hundred and eighty-one had heard the statement in silence and forthwith had departed in a quiet and orderly manner. O'Hara asked permission to send his men back to the station house.

Congressman Mallard returned to Washington on the midnight train, his secretary accompanying him. Outwardly he did not bear himself like a sick man, but on his handsome face was a look which the secretary had never before seen on his employer's face. It was the look of a man who asks himself a question over and over again.

On Thursday, in conspicuous type, black faced and double-leaded, there appeared on the front page and again at the top of the editorial column of every daily paper, morning and evening, in the United States, and in every weekly and every monthly

paper whose date of publication chanced to be Thursday, the following paragraph:

"There is a name which the press of America no longer prints. Let every true American, in public or in private, cease hereafter from uttering that name."

Invariably the caption over this paragraph was the one word:

SILENCE!

One week later, to the day, the wife of one of the richest men in America died of acute pneumonia at her home in Chicago. Practically all the daily papers in America carried notices of this lady's death; the wealth of her husband and her own prominence in social and philanthropic affairs justified this. At greater or at less length it was variously set forth that she was the niece of a former ambassador to the Court of St. James; that she was the national head of a great patriotic organisation; that she was said to have dispensed upward of fifty

thousand dollars a year in charities; that she was born in such and such a year at such and such a place; that she left, besides a husband, three children and one grandchild; and so forth and so on.

But not a single paper in the United States stated that she was the only sister of Congressman Jason Mallard.

The remainder of this account must necessarily be in the nature of a description of episodes occurring at intervals during a period of about six weeks; these episodes, though separated by lapses of time, are nevertheless related.

Three days after the burial of his sister Congressman Mallard took part in a debate on a matter of war-tax legislation upon the floor of the House. As usual he voiced the sentiments of a minority of one, his vote being the only vote cast in the negative on the passage of the measure. His speech was quite brief. To his colleagues, listening in dead silence without sign of dissent or approval, it seemed exceedingly brief, seeing that nearly always before Mallard, when he spoke at all upon any question, spoke at

HE MAY OR MAY NOT KEEP FAITH, BUT YOU CAN BET HE ALWAYS KEEPS A SCRAP-BOOK.

length. While he spoke the men in the press gallery took no notes, and when he had finished and was leaving the chamber it was noted that the venerable Congressman Boulder, a man of nearly eighty, drew himself well into his seat, as though he feared Mallard in passing along the aisle might brush against him.

The only publication in America that carried a transcript of Congressman Mallard's remarks on this occasion was the Congressional Record.

At the next day's session Congressman Mallard's seat was vacant; the next day likewise, and the next it was vacant. It was rumoured that he had left Washington, his exact whereabouts being unknown. However, no one in Washington, so far as was known, in speaking of his disappearance, mentioned him by name. One man addressing another would merely say that he understood a certain person had left town or that he understood a certain person was still missing from town; the second man in all likelihood would merely nod under-

standingly and then by tacit agreement the subject would be changed.

Just outside one of the lunch rooms in the Union Station at St. Louis late one night in the latter part of January an altercation occurred between two men. One was a tall, distinguished-looking man of middle age. The other was a railroad employé—a sweeper and cleaner.

It seemed that the tall man, coming out of the lunch room, and carrying a travelling bag and a cane, stumbled over the broom which the sweeper was using on the floor just beyond the doorway. The traveller, who appeared to have but poor control over his temper, or rather no control at all over it, accused the station hand of carelessness and cursed him. The station hand made an indignant and impertinent denial. At that the other flung down his bag, swung aloft his heavy walking stick and struck the sweeper across the head with force sufficient to lay open the victim's scalp in a two-inch gash, which bled freely.

For once a policeman was on the spot when trouble occurred. This particular

policeman was passing through the train shed and he saw the blow delivered. He ran up and, to be on the safe side, put both men under technical arrest. The sweeper, who had been bowled over by the clout he had got, made a charge of unprovoked assault against the stranger; the latter expressed a blasphemous regret that he had not succeeded in cracking the sweeper's skull. He appeared to be in a highly nervous, highly irritable state. At any rate such was the interpretation which the patrolman put upon his aggressive prisoner's behaviour.

Walking between the pair to prevent further hostilities the policeman took both men into the station master's office, his intention being to telephone from there for a patrol wagon. The night station master accompanied them. Inside the room, while the station master was binding up the wound in the sweeper's forehead with a pocket handkerchief, it occurred to the policeman that in the flurry of excitement he had not found out the name of the tall and still excited belligerent. The sweeper he already

knew. He asked the tall man for his name and business.

"My name," said the prisoner, "is Jason C. Mallard. I am a member of Congress."

The station master forgot to make the knot in the bandage he was tying about the sweeper's head. The sweeper forgot the pain of his new headache and the blood which trickled down his face and fell upon the front of his overalls. As though governed by the same set of wires these two swung about, and with the officer they stared at the stranger. And as they stared, recognition came into the eyes of all three, and they marvelled that before now none of them had discerned the identity of the owner of that splendid tousled head of hair and those clean-cut features, now swollen and red with an unreasonable choler. The policeman was the first to get his shocked and jostled senses back, and the first to speak. He proved himself a quick-witted person that night, this policeman did; and perhaps this helps to explain why his superior, the head of the St. Louis police department,

on the very next day promoted him to be a sergeant.

But when he spoke it was not to Mallard but to the sweeper.

"Look here, Mel Harris," he said; "you call yourself a purty good Amurican, don't you?"

"You bet your life I do!" was the answer. "Ain't I got a boy in camp soldierin'?"

"Well, I got two there myself," said the policeman; "but that ain't the question now. I see you've got a kind of a little bruised place there on your head. Now then, as a good Amurican tryin' to do your duty to your country at all times, I want you to tell me how you come by that there bruise. Did somebody mebbe hit you, or as a matter of fact ain't it the truth that you jest slipped on a piece of banana peelin' or something of that nature, and fell up against the door jamb of that lunch room out yonder?"

For a moment the sweeper stared at his interrogator, dazed. Then a grin of appreciation bisected his homely red-streaked face.

"Why, it was an accident, officer," he

answered. "I slipped down and hit my own self a wallop, jest like you said. Anyway, it don't amount to nothin'."

"You seen what happened, didn't you?" went on the policeman, addressing the station master. "It was a pure accident, wasn't it?"

"That's what it was—a pure accident," stated the station master.

"Then, to your knowledge, there wasn't no row of any sort occurring round here tonight?" went on the policeman.

"Not that I heard of."

"Well, if there had a-been you'd a-heard of it, wouldn't you?"

"Sure I would!"

"That's good," said the policeman. He jabbed a gloved thumb toward the two witnesses. "Then, see here, Harris! Bein' as it was an accident pure and simple and your own fault besides, nobody—no outsider—couldn't a-had nothin' to do with your gettin' hurt, could he?"

"Not a thing in the world," replied Harris.

"Not a thing in the world," echoed the station master.

"And you ain't got any charge to make against anybody for what was due to your own personal awkwardness, have you?" suggested the blue-coated prompter.

"Certainly I ain't!" disclaimed Harris almost indignantly.

Mallard broke in: "You can't do this—you men," he declared hoarsely. "I struck that man and I'm glad I did strike him—damn him! I wish I'd killed him. I'm willing to take the consequences. I demand that you make a report of this case to your superior officer."

As though he had not heard him—as though he did not know a fourth person was present—the policeman, looking right past Mallard with a levelled, steady, contemptuous gaze, addressed the other two. His tone was quite casual, and yet somehow he managed to freight his words with a scorn too heavy to be expressed in mere words:

"Boys," he said, "it seems-like to me the air in this room is so kind of foul that it

ain't fitten for good Amuricans to be breathin' it. So I'm goin' to open up this here door and see if it don't purify itself—of its own accord."

He stepped back and swung the door wide open; then stepped over and joined the station master and the sweeper. And there together they all three stood without a word from any one of them as the fourth man, with his face deadly white now where before it had been a passionate red, and his head lolling on his breast, though he strove to hold it rigidly erect, passed silently out of the little office. Through the opened door the trio with their eyes followed him while he crossed the concrete floor of the concourse and passed through a gate. They continued to watch until he had disappeared in the murk, going toward where a row of parked sleepers stood at the far end of the train shed.

Yet another policeman is to figure in this recital of events. This policeman's name is Caleb Waggoner and this Caleb Waggoner was and still is the night marshal in a small

town in Iowa on the Missouri River. He is one-half the police force of the town, the other half being a constable who does duty in the daytime. Waggoner suffers from an affection which in a large community might prevent him from holding such a job as the one he does hold. He has an impediment of the speech which at all times causes him to stammer badly. When he is excited it is only by a tremendous mental and physical effort and after repeated endeavours that he can form the words at all. In other regards he is a first-rate officer, sober, trustworthy and kindly.

On the night of the eighteenth of February, at about half past eleven o'clock, Marshal Waggoner was completing his regular before-midnight round of the business district. The weather was nasty, with a raw wet wind blowing and half-melted slush underfoot. In his tour he had encountered not a single person. That dead dumb quiet which falls upon a sleeping town on a winter's night was all about him. But as he turned out of Main Street, which is the principal thoroughfare, into Sycamore

Street, a short byway running down between scattered buildings and vacant lots to the river bank a short block away, he saw a man standing at the side door of the Eagle House, the town's second-best hotel. A gas lamp flaring raggedly above the doorway brought out the figure with distinctness. The man was not moving—he was just standing there, with the collar of a heavy overcoat turned up about his throat and a soft black hat with a wide brim drawn well down upon his head.

Drawing nearer, Waggoner, who by name or by sight knew every resident of the town, made up his mind that the loiterer was a stranger. Now a stranger abroad at such an hour and apparently with no business to mind would at once be mentally catalogued by the vigilant night marshal as a suspicious person. So when he had come close up to the other, padding noiselessly in his heavy rubber boots, the officer halted and from a distance of six feet or so stared steadfastly at the suspect. The suspect returned the look.

What Waggoner saw was a thin, haggard

face covered to the upper bulge of the jaw-bones with a disfiguring growth of reddish whiskers and inclosed at the temples by shaggy, unkempt strands of red hair which protruded from beneath the black hat. Evidently the man had not been shaved for weeks; certainly his hair needed trimming and combing. But what at the moment impressed Waggoner more even than the general unkemptness of the stranger's aspect was the look out of his eyes. They were widespread eyes and bloodshot as though from lack of sleep, and they glared into Waggoner's with a peculiar, strained, hearkening expression. There was agony in them —misery unutterable.

Thrusting his head forward then, the stranger cried out, and his voice, which in his first words was deep and musical, suddenly, before he had uttered a full sentence, turned to a sharp, half-hysterical falsetto:

"Why don't you say something to me, man?" he cried at the startled Waggoner. "For God's sake, why don't you speak to me? Even if you do know me, why don't

you speak? Why don't you call me by my name? I can't stand it—I can't stand it any longer, I tell you. You've got to speak."

Astounded, Waggoner strove to answer. But, because he was startled and a bit apprehensive as well, his throat locked down on his faulty vocal cords. His face moved and his lips twisted convulsively, but no sound issued from his mouth.

The stranger, glaring into Waggoner's face with those two goggling eyes of his, which were all eyeballs, threw up both arms at full length and gave a great gagging outcry.

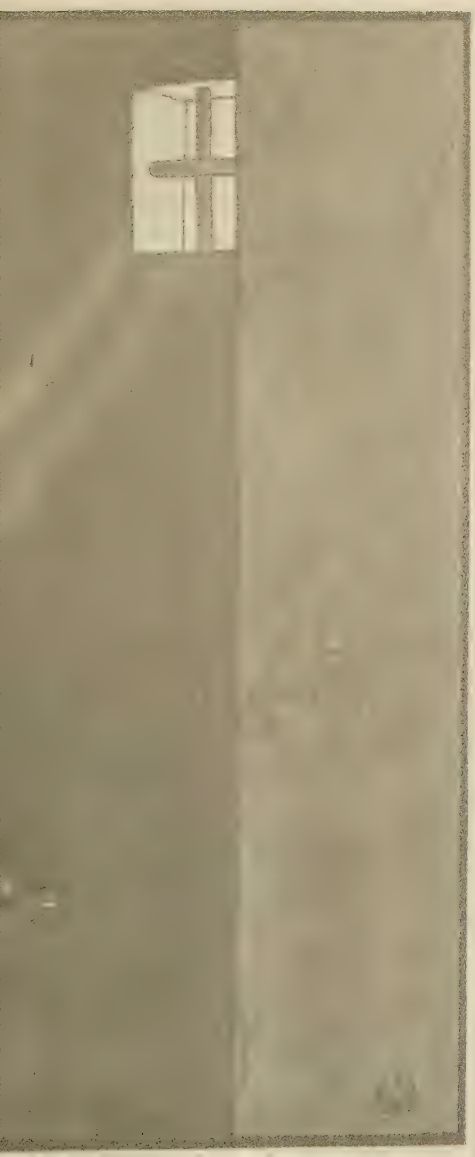
"It's come!" he shrieked; "it's come! The silence has done it at last. It deafens me—I'm deaf! I can't hear you! I can't hear you!"

He turned and ran south—toward the river—and Waggoner, recovering himself, ran after him full bent. It was a strangely silent race these two ran through the empty little street, for in the half-melted snow their feet made no sounds at all. Waggoner, for obvious reasons, could utter no words; the other man did not.

A scant ten feet in the lead the fugitive reached the high clay bank of the river. Without a backward glance at his pursuer, without checking his speed, he went off and over the edge and down out of sight into the darkness. Even at the end of the twenty-foot plunge the body in striking made almost no sound at all, for, as Waggoner afterward figured, it must have struck against a mass of shore ice, then instantly to slide off, with scarcely a splash, into the roiled yellow waters beyond.

The policeman checked his own speed barely in time to save himself from following over the brink. He crouched on the verge of the frozen clay bluff, peering downward into the blackness and the quiet. He saw nothing and he heard nothing except his own laboured breathing.

The body was never recovered. But at daylight a black soft hat was found on a half-rotted ice floe, where it had lodged close up against the bank. A name was stamped in the sweatband, and by this the identity of the suicide was established as that of Congressman Jason Mallard.



Berea College Library

Accession 91347

Class

Book C653t

Volume

Source Mrs. Levant Dodge

C653t

BEREA COLLEGE LIBRARY

Berea, Ky.

GOOD BOOKS ARE FOR PLEASURE AND FOR PROFIT. THEY HELP MAKE LIFE WORTH WHILE.

Rules

Books may be kept for two weeks and then renewed for the same period unless needed by another person. This does not apply to unbound periodicals or "14 day books."

2 cents a day is charged for each book kept overtime. No person who has an unpaid fine may draw books. Any book is subject to recall at any time if needed for class use.

SINCE OUR AIM IS TO HAVE A BOOK READ BY AS MANY AS WISH TO DO SO, PLEASE GIVE THIS BOOK GOOD CARE AND RETURN IT AS SOON AS READ.

LIBRARY BUREAU CAT. NO. 1169.6 KP 29685 B

INDIANA

H C653t
The thunders o
Cobb, Irvin S. (Ir
HUTCHIN LIBRARY
3 3217 00087 1633
08-AKY-271